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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON WAR ON IRAQ

Summary

-- Jordan's daily papers today, March 26, are dominated by a lead story highlighting Jordan's categorical rejection of Iraqi charges that Jordan was blocking trade and responsible for a disruption in the oil supply between the two countries. In press conferences held by the Minister of Information, the Minister of Industry and Trade and by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jordan's senior leadership responded strongly to the Iraqi accusations, describing them as "unwarranted and irresponsible". Other lead stories continue to focus on developments in the war on Iraq

Editorial Commentary

-- "The injustice of our kinfolk"

Center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (03/26) editorializes: "Yesterday was a sad day for us in Jordan as we saw Iraqi officials fall in the trap of the psychological war that is being launched and set up by those who are upset by Jordan's firm nationalistic stand towards Iraq. Those officials started to believe rumors and accepted to be part of the skepticism that is targeted against Iraq's morale. They forgot how much Jordan suffered for the sake of their cause over the past two decades."

-- "Jordan and Iraq, one fate"

Daily columnist Bater Wardam writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (03/26): "We do not need to defend Jordan, because its track record is sufficient to speak in defense of itself. The Jordanian leadership and people have always been real in their support for Iraq in times of crisis."

-- "Shock and awe"

Daily columnist Fahd Fanek writes on the back page of semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (03/26): "The political and military planning for the war was based on the idea that the war would be quick and fast, whereby Iraqi cities would fall one after the other, but no one thought that Umm Qasr would be difficult to overcome. The aggressors expected that the Iraqi people would welcome them with open arms as the liberators and not as occupiers, but the Iraqi people knew them for who they really are. The current war is not equal, for there is a clear technological superiority on the American side. Yet, America suffers from a deficiency in will power, legitimacy and morality. The Iraqi citizens are fighting hard in defense of their land and their dignity. Why would the American soldiers fight so that American companies can take over the oil, and so Israel's military superiority is entrenched and strengthened?"

GNEHM